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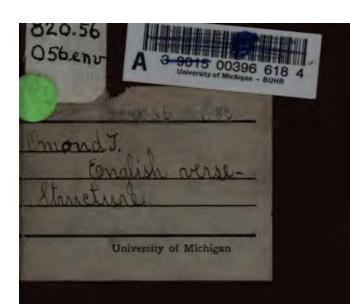
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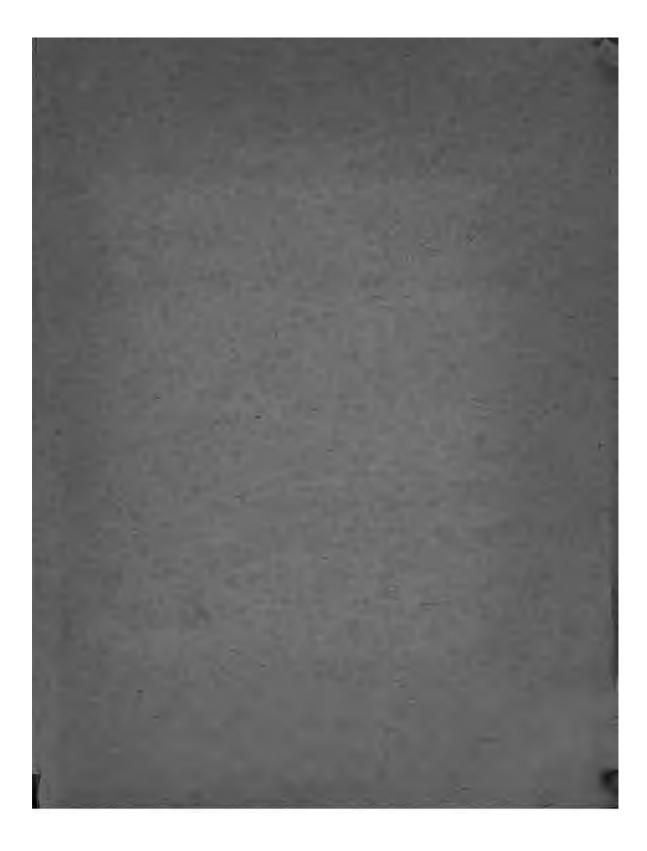
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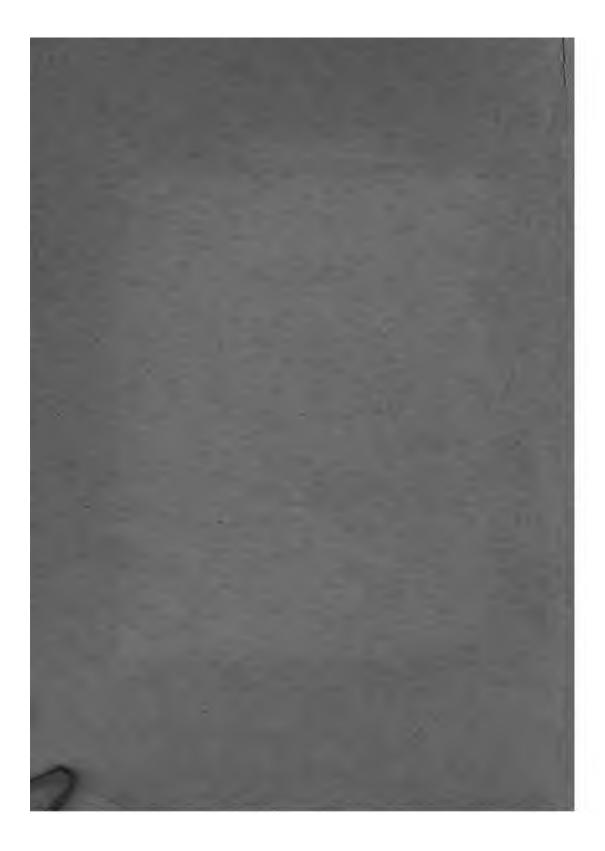
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English Verse-Structure

T. S. OMOND



ENGLISH VERSE-STRUCTURE

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English Verse-Structure

(A Prefatory Study)

M.A. EDIN. & OXON.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

ού γὰρ ταις συλλαβαις ἀπευθύνουσι τοὺς χρόνους, άλλα τοις χρόνοις τας συλλαβάς.

> DAVID DOUGLAS EDINBURGH 1897

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ENGLISH VERSE-STRUCTURE.

In a recently published pamphlet,* an attempt was made to indicate the lines on which a truly English hexameter, following the rules and methods of our native verse, might yet be written. And incidentally it was suggested that the *period of time*, rather than either the *foot* or the *accent*, should be regarded as the unit of English verse. The present paper seeks to develop this latter idea, and exemplify the merits or demerits of its application to metrical questions; having regard always to the absolute facts of English prosody, and proceeding as far as possible by analysis of actual lines, rather than by dogmatic statement of preconceived theory.

Of course there is no novelty in such a suggestion. The "periodicity" of metre is a fact recognised by all. Regular recurrence of rhythm, in other words, is precisely what distinguishes verse from prose. But when we come to ask, What is it that recurs? the answer is not quite so plain. Our older writers, following Classic tradition, said it was a "foot," or collocation of syllables in some particular order. But the attempt to find accurate spondees, dactyls, iambs † and the rest in our accentually governed verse borders on the chimerical. Later critics, following Coleridge's hint in the preface to Christabel, have held that the law of English verse consists in regular recurrence of accent. "For all scientific pur-

^{*} English Hexameter Verse, with a Specimen. David Douglas; Edinburgh, 1807.

[†] An explanation of these and other terms borrowed from Classic prosody will be found in Appendix, Note A.

poses," says a standard work of this later school,* "we count by accents rather than by syllables." This is a step in advance, but it does not take us far enough. What are we to do when a line which should have five accents turns out to have only four or three? Yet critics agree that this is so in, for example, many lines of *Paradise Lost*. What is it, then, which remains constant when accents as well as syllables become erratic and irregular?

To supply this obvious gap in nomenclature, I propose for the present to use the word "periods." Every line in Paradise Lost without exception consists of five periods. Accents may vary, "feet" contain fewer syllables or more, but the number of "periods" remains unaltered. When we find a line like

"Curiosity, inquisitive, importune,"

it is not enough to recognise, as we all do, that it has only three accents (using this word in its simple and obvious sense). We must recognise also that the line still contains five periods, and that on this fact—in whatever terms we choose to express it—depends the metrical character of the verse.

So stated, the proposition may seem a mere truism. Yet note what is implied. It follows that in such a line the ear of a supreme master of English verse-music allowed him to fill up two out of the five periods of his metre with unaccented syllables, or, to speak more exactly, with unaccented syllables and with pauses. Such a fact is somewhat difficult to square with the usual definitions of our "iambic verse." Not dwelling on this at present, let us next see how the recognition of *periods* may sometimes throw new light on the actual nature of a metre, and assist us in "scanning" it.

Take the familiar nursery-rhyme, whose metre has been compared to the ancient "Saturnian"—

"The queen was in her parlour, eating bread and honey."

^{*} Latham's English Language (4th edition, 1855), Part III. c. 6.

What is the metre of this line, and how are the "feet" to be divided? In Prof. Mayor's Chapters on English Metre (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1886), perhaps the ablest of recent works of the kind, this verse is said (p. 8) to consist of six feet. The first three he is not sure whether to call iambs followed by a supernumerary syllable—The queen | was in | her par- | lour-or trochees preceded by the same -The | queen was | in her | parlour-; the last three he has no doubt are trochees. Now on this it seems natural to say, first, that the word "honey" is not a trochee in the same sense as the others. The scheme of the metre obviously ends on the first syllable of that word; the second syllable is accidental, occurring or not according as the rhyme is dissyllabic or monosyllabic. This perhaps is mainly a question of terminology. But, second, the important thing to notice is that, neglecting this accidental syllable entirely, the line even without it consists, not of six feet, but of seven periods. Ask any child to repeat the lines. You will find that the word "parlour" is not pronounced short like the others, but is spread over the space of two "periods." This sing-song recitation points to an actual fact. The proof that the line consists of seven periods is that all seven may be filled up with syllables, without our feeling that the metre is departed from, e.g.—

"The king | was in | his count- | ing-house, | a-count- | ing out | his mon-[ey]."

The metre itself, therefore—the underlying scheme on which the verse is built—is clearly one of seven periods, which may be filled up either with syllables or with their equivalent in pauses; and any adequate system of scansion ought surely to recognise this fact.

I propose, accordingly, to "scan" these lines by showing the pauses as well as the words, using the signs for plus and minus according as the pause comes in the place of an accented or an unaccented syllable. If, for this once only, the reader will be good enough, in

repeating the lines aloud, to insert the words "phis" and "min" (or any other words he prefers) where the symbols are marked, the effect intended will be made perfectly clear. He will understand, however, that this is done merely to call attention to the pauses, not to suggest that they should have been filled up with words; also that the "sing-song" recitation spreads the word parlour over the space of "parlour + -," instead of, as here, following its ordinary pronunciation with a pause.

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"The queen | was in | her par- | lour + | -, eat- | ing bread | and hon-fey];
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The king | was in | his count- | ing-house | -, count- | ing out | his mon-[ey];

The maid | was in | the gar- | den + | -, hang- | ing out | the clothes-

- By | - came | a black- | bird + | and nipt | - off | her nose!"

Each line thus consists of seven divisions, roughly uniform as regards length. The really spirited effect of the last line is now seen to be obtained by the omission of no less than four syllables from the scheme which, nevertheless, underlies this line as it does the others. This underlying scheme is normally "iambic," but in the second half of each line it becomes "trochaic" by the omission of one syllable, an omission which is skilfully varied in the fourth line. The technical term for such an alteration is "anacrusis," but it is better here to keep to English phrases. I proceed now to apply the same system of scansion to a poem of very beautiful music, the definition of whose metre is without it a task of some little difficulty.

Tennyson's lines "In the Valley of Cauteretz" begin as follows:

"All along the valley, stream that flashest white, Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night."

These lines are scanned by Prof. Mayor (p. 104) as consisting of six trochees. But to bring them to this he has to twist and contort

them sadly. The first "Deepening" is to contain three syllables, the second only two, though Tennyson in this latter case always wrote "deep'ning." "Voice" is to be made a dissyllable in "the voice of the dead," and the words before it, "as the," treated as hypermetrical. "Iambic intrusion" is a possible alternative, and various other devices are suggested. All this can be avoided if we treat the poem as built on the same metrical basis as the last, and again scan to show pauses as well as words. The proof that it consists of seven periods again is that they can be filled up without departure from metrical feeling—

"The two and thirty years were as a mist that rolls away."

The word as, interpolated here, of course alters (and spoils) the cadence of this particular line; but otherwise it is admissible. I will "scan" the whole poem, and the reader is requested this time not to fill up the pauses with any words or even inarticulate sounds, but to let the silence of the "rests" produce its intended effect. The initial pause (anacrusis), which gives the trochaic effect, cannot of course be directly shown in reading aloud, but its presence is felt all the same.

"-All along the valley + -, stream that flashest white,
- Dee - pening thy voice - with the deepening of the night,
- All along the valley + -, where thy waters flow,
I walk'd with one I loved - two and thirty years ago.
- All along the valley + -, while I walk'd to-day,
The two and thirty years - were a mist that rolls away;
For all along the valley + -, down thy rocky bed,
Thy living voice to me was as the voice - of the dead,
And all along the valley +, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice - of the dead - was a living voice to me."

If the reader will recite these lines in a semi-chanting voice, dwelling fully on the long vowels, "mouthing out his hollow aes and oes," and at the same time pausing where the "rests" are marked, I believe he will get the precise effect which the poet

intended. Scansion will assist him in reading, instead of being an impediment; and the seven periods of each line will reveal themselves unmistakeably. Words like voice, loved, and years are to be pronounced, not as dissyllables, but as monosyllables whose length carries us partially or perhaps entirely over the pause which follows. The correct scansion is therefore not, as the accent seems to require, in the sixth line "The two and thirty years were +," or in the tenth line "The voice of + the dead was +." The weak words were, of, and was are deliberately placed where an accented syllable would normally come, to heighten the effect of the pause. In the second line there is an almost imperceptible difference between the two Deepenings, the first syllable of this second line, owing to its prominent position, being dwelt upon longer than when the word recurs a second time. The pause which follows in my notation is not meant to indicate any division of the word in speaking; the long vowel of Dee- carries the voice over the pause. The remainder of the word is sounded alike in each case, almost as a monosyllable, so as to leave room for something else in the "period." This slight quickening of normal time is but another instance of the studied irregularity which gives the metre its exquisite cadence. And the scansionscheme here adopted, while it really confirms Prof. Mayor's judgement in each case where he has detected irregularity, shows the cause of each irregularity in the simplest and most convincing way, and brings out the precision of metrical structure which underlies all the seeming irregularity and licence.

The fact that in one of these lines, and only one by my reckoning, there occurs a slight addition to the normal number of syllables occupying a "period," brings us to the next stage of our inquiry. It will be seen that the "period" is conceived of as much analogous to a bar of music, to exhibit the full notation of which we must write the rests as well as the notes. Here again we are dealing with no very novel ideas. Time is always considered to be of the essence

of metre, and in our accentual rhythm its function is certainly not less important than in the quantitative metres of the Ancients. Music and dancing are closely allied to verse-rhythm, and it is difficult to believe that the guiding principle of each is not fundamentally the same. Before, however, considering the question whether the time of a "bar" of verse is fixed or variable, it will be well to study the period under conditions of greater complexity, since all our knowledge of this matter must be gained by actual observation, a priori assumption being unsatisfactory and ridiculous. My next examples shall be taken from the work of a poet whose detractors sometimes deny him possession of an ear, but in whose masculine verses— φ erârra συντοῦισι—music of a very deep and true, though not always of the more obvious and "tinkling," sort will assuredly be found in abundance by those who have ears to hear.

Browning's "Pheidippides" (Dramatic Idylls, first series, 1879) is written in a very peculiar metre—unique, so far as I know, in English verse. The structure of the lines will be recognised as "choriambic" (see Appendix, Note A). It consists of three periods, each reproducing more or less exactly the effect of this Classic foot, in which the first and fourth syllables are long, the second and third short. A sample line will show the approximation—

["Persia has come,] [Athens asks aid,] and [still they debate."]

Here the word and intervenes between the second and third foot or period. But this word is not "hypermetrical." It occupies a space, which by a familiar principle of English verse constitutes an interval between the periods.* The English ear is not fond of allowing two

^{*} Compare Mr Swinburne's use of a similar metre, *Poems and Ballads*, 1878, p. 141. His unrivalled metrical skill has enabled him to dispense with redundant syllables, to leave the pauses unfilled up. Yet even in his hands the rhythm strikes one as exotic and unusual. It is an exact reproduction of a well-known Classic form, where the three choriambs are preceded by a spondee and followed by an iamb. Browning's is apparently an original adaptation.

111

81

strongly accented syllables to come closely together; it prefers to separate them either by a pause or by unaccented syllables. Accordingly here our three periods are separated by two intervals, each of which seems to represent the time occupied by two unaccented syllables; and a similar pause precedes the first period. These intervals may be filled up, either in whole or in part, and one or other may be left blank. But no case occurs where all three are left blank. Thus we get such variations as

["Swing of thy spear.] [Phoibos and Art-]emis [clang them 'ye must.'"] ["Thunder, thou Zeus!] Ath-[ené, are Spar-]tans a [quarry beyond."] ["Athens, except] for that [sparkle, thy name,] I had [mouldered to ash."],

according as no syllables, or one syllable, or two syllables, intervene between the periods. The permissible maximum of syllables is reached in the line

"In your [favour, so long] as the [moon, half-orbed,] is un-[able to take]," with one qualification. In the second period, it will be observed, three syllables occupy the space normally assigned to four. This is of course because they are naturally long syllables. And this at once gives us the key to the few further changes. While all the lines—except as will have to be noted presently—occupy the time suggested by the above scansion, the poet does not bind himself to the exact number of syllables in any foot. When three syllables will occupy the time of the ordinary four, he uses them freely. Thus, very early in the poem, we get three consecutive lines beginning "[Ay, with Zeus]," "[Also, ye]," "[Now, henceforth]," in each case followed by two unaccented syllables. Compare these with the initial periods of the lines quoted above, and it will readily be seen that the time is practically the same. And a slight farther extension of the same principle gives us the line which follows the last three—

"[Hand and heart] and [voice! For Ath-]ens, leave [pasture and flock],"

where the metre, though rough, is not after all so very far removed from the underlying scheme of scansion.

The full scheme of this metre is therefore six anapaests, which by omission of syllables are turned into three choriambs, separated either by pauses or words; or we may call it six dactyls, truncated at the end, and varied by spondees and half-feet. On these principles, and allowing this latitude of syllabification, the bulk of the poem can be scanned easily enough. But in two places Browning has, for some reason, chosen to lengthen successive lines by something like the space of two syllables tacked on at the end of the line. It is tempting to argue that this is merely filling up the space which follows the last period as it does the others, but this would be to ignore the importance which English verse attaches to the definitely marked close of the line. That Browning lengthened the verse deliberately, to produce a specific effect, seems perfectly certain. Pheidippides in each case is speaking breathlessly and impetuously -the passages will be easily found-and these long hypermetrical lines are probably meant to express his hurry and agitation. Whether the means employed to create this effect are quite legitimate—whether the effect is really a happy one, or does not needlessly perplex the already somewhat intricate scheme of the poet's music—are questions to which different readers may perhaps fairly give different answers. But that there is in these lines a deliberate addition to the scheme of the others, a deliberate lengthening of the line for some specific end and purpose, seems too clear to need further argument.

Setting aside these lines, the rest of the poem conforms with substantial exactness to the scheme indicated above. To ascertain the precise limits of syllabic variation is not very difficult. But it may be better, for this purpose, to take another poem in a somewhat more familiar and more easily distinguishable metre. A good instance, it has been suggested by a friendly critic, is Browning's

poem "Rephan" (Asolando volume, 1889). Here the scheme of verse is admittedly anapaestic. It contains, I should prefer to say, four periods, of which the first three are intended to have the anapaestic effect, the fourth an iambic, thus securing that strong finish in which English verse delights. A typical line is

"When my home | was the star | of my god | Rephan."

(The name Rephan is accented on the second syllable; the quantity of the first is unimportant.) But, starting from this anapaestic basis, the poet allows himself almost any variation of "feet." Trochees, iambs, pyrrhics, dactyls, and tribrachs seem to be substituted for anapaests at pleasure. So at last we come to a verse containing no single anapaest, a verse which, if found by itself, we should set down as octosyllabic metre, "iambic with trochaic substitution"—

"Nothing begins—so needs to end.
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend."

Yet, by some magic of the poet's, the anapaestic effect is maintained throughout all these changes; we read them to the same tune, we are conscious of variety but not of breach of type.

How is this effect produced? Clearly, in this instance once again, by the manipulation of pause. We do not read these lines in the same time as octosyllabic metre, as when we read

"The stag at eve had drunk his fill."

Our ear is conscious of a slower time, of each "foot" or period being meant to occupy the space of an anapaest. The pause this time is not between the periods; accented syllables being followed by unaccented, the periods succeed each other without intervals. It is during the period itself that the metre broods and lingers, a pause being substituted at pleasure for any syllable of the anapaest. Efficient scansion of this poem, therefore, must recognise the pauses as well as the syllables, just as in the previous instances. With this

key, the metre presents little difficulty. *Periods* may contain two syllables, or three; occasionally, by a bold use of initial "anacrusis," may contain but one.

- " Come then around me, close about."
- "Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm."
- " What-in that uniform universe."

Every line, I think, can be scanned by attention to these simple rules. But as to uniformity within the periods themselves, nothing could be further from the fact. Accented and unaccented syllables are shifted about in almost every imaginable way. Within the limits of his metre, the poet has evidently intended to make his verse as various as it well can be.

What, then, is the principle on which this variety is based? Is it simple carelessness or studied wilfulness on the poet's part? Or is English verse a mere chaos, in which no fixed rule or method can be found? Neither of these questions need be answered in the affirmative. English prosody has its own fundamental laws, which no English writer can transgress with impunity; but we must not assume that we know these by intuition, or try to substitute for them the rules of Greek and Latin metre. The attempt to find really accurate "feet" in English has indeed been abandoned; but I do not know that the reason for doing so has been very accurately stated. One is often told, for example, that the rules of Classic quantity do not apply in English, because (taking an obvious illustration) a vowel with us is more commonly shortened than lengthened before two consonants. But this, though it sounds plausible, surely involves a confusion between metrical quantity and natural quantity. It is not the case, I imagine, that the real or natural quantity of a short vowel in Latin was altered when it came before two consonants; it was merely accounted long by metrical rule.* As some

^{*} See Appendix, Note B.

writers put it, the syllable became long, not the vowel. The origin of this rule or convention is not very clear. Natural quantity depends primarily on length or shortness of vowel-sound. But it may be argued that, as a short vowel followed by several consonants takes longer to pronounce than the same vowel followed by only one, there is a certain fitness in accounting the syllable in the former case equivalent to a long vowel. Yet why, on this showing, does the rule apply only to consonants which follow a vowel? The first syllable of scopulus takes as long to pronounce as the first syllable of offendo; yet the rule applies only in the latter case. Whatever the cause, it is at least clear that positional quantity did not depend on the length or shortness of vowels. And there seems no reason, therefore, why we too might not have adopted similar (not necessarily identical) rules of prosodical quantity, had there been good reasons for instead of against this course. attempt was actually made by our Elizabethan hexametrists. It failed, and we all agree that it deserved to fail—all, that is, except a few overbold experimentalists, against whose then recent efforts Tennyson directed his well-known lines about the "lame hexameters," though so accomplished a critic as Mr Lang strangely imagines these to have force against the accentual hexameters of writers like Lockhart.* But why, precisely, did the Elizabethan attempt fail? It failed, I take it, because our poets found that another power was in possession of the field. Accent—the stress or emphasis by which in English we distinguish one syllable beyond its neighbours—was already enthroned as monarch of our language, from whose laws there could be no appeal. Verses which complied with rules of quantity and neglected accent proved intolerable to the English ear. And to attempt to reconcile accent and quantity, to write verses quantitatively correct by Latin rule and yet never

^{*} Life of Lockhart (1896), Vol. I. p. 335.

violating the stress of our accent, is to undertake a task of almost inconceivable difficulty, which when performed would have no meaning for the English reader.

Both assertions in this last sentence may require justification. It might be possible, as a tour de force, to write a few specimen lines perfectly obeying both accent and quantity. Tennyson's Alcaics on Milton are sometimes quoted as an instance of this. But he himself makes no such claim. His lines are entitled simply an "experiment in quantity." And, though his fine ear naturally avoided any gross breach of accentual cadence, it is far from true that his syllables really comply with the metrical rule in regard of accent as well as of quantity. Either accent or quantity forms a sufficient basis of metre; both together would exercise a tyranny intolerable to bear, which would reduce verse-composition to the level of a Chinese puzzle. Moreover-and this is the really important fact to us-all this laborious letter-counting would be but labour in vain. The English ear, trained to exclusive dependence on accent, is supremely indifferent to minor details of quantity. The work of sound, in our verse, is decorative rather than constitutive. By attention to it the skilful singer makes his verse musical. But the most glaring defiance of quantity does not make a verse incorrect or unmetrical; it merely renders it harsh and clumsy. To exalt quantity into a structural law of English metre is to depart from the guiding principles of our prosody. It may be said rather to play, with us, somewhat the same subordinate and ornamental part that accent would appear to have done in Classical Latin verse.* Its function is negative rather than positive; it should never be neglected, but the less conspicuous its operation, the happier will be the result. In other words, natural quantity of course exists in English, as it must do apparently in all language; metrical quantity does not exist, and the supremacy of accent is the reason why it does not.

^{*} See Appendix, Note C.

But if we cannot have quantitative feet in English, may we not have accentual? Regarding an accented syllable as long, an unaccented as short, may we not get iambs, dactyls, and the rest as in the old prosody? We may, no doubt, in a very rough and general sense. Approximately, at least, such divisions are found in English. and it is convenient to recognise them. These Classic terms form a useful shorthand, as it were, and save time in describing. Or we may adopt any other notation we like, substituting AX or OI for the iamb, XA or IO for the trochee, and so forth. But we must always remember that these units are only approximately correct. have, and can have, no rigorous accentual proportion corresponding to the Ancient quantitative scheme. In Greek and Latin verse, one long syllable was taken as equal to two short. This, at any rate, must have been a pure metrical convention; it is inconceivable that the proportions of natural quantity can have varied in this precise ratio. But we have never adopted any such proportion of accentual syllables in English. It would be too glaringly untrue to fact. Just as in quantity we have an infinity of gradations, shading imperceptibly from more long or short to less, so also is it with accent. Besides, our English accent is shifting, capricious, uncertain; a creature of infinite variety. The same word is accented one moment. unaccented the next. Our appreciation of metre depends upon catching, to some extent, the play of accent intended by the poet. This we can only do partially and incompletely; we must do it to some extent, or we could not enjoy the verse. But when one critic considers a syllable long by accent, another short, who is to judge between them? There is no tribunal to adjudicate: one man's opinion is as good as another's. In reading any book on English metres, one finds oneself continually agreeing with the principles. disagreeing with their application. A specimen line is scanned by the writer in one way; another way seems to us as good or better. and there is no saying which is right. Accent, in short, taken by

itself is too vague, and shifting, and uncertain, to be made the basis of anything like really accurate "feet;" nor, as a matter of fact, have our poets chosen to supplement its deficiencies by the aid of fixed rules of quantity. It follows, then, that the patent facts of English prosody are not explained by any system of exact and accurate feet, even if these feet be taken as constructed on a basis of accent instead of quantity.

It can scarcely be necessary to labour this point. The proof of it is patent in every line of our poetry. But it may be said, the difference is not so absolute as you would make out. Even in Classic verse, one dactyl differed from another dactyl; they were equal by metrical rule, not by natural quantity. And this is of course true. But in Greek and Latin verse at least both were dactyls, and the place of a dactyl in the hexameter could only be taken by a foot of equal length. In English we have absolutely no such rule, so long as we confine our attention to syllables alone. A pyrrhic takes the place of a spondee, a trochee of an anapaest. That is, assuming that we can really so differentiate our units. But who is to say that our differentiation is correct? It depends on accent, and accent is one thing to me, another to you. Our metrists dispute with each other as to what the "feet" of particular lines actually are. I recall instances where Clough and Conington, Prof. Masson and Dr Abbott, Prof. Mayor and Mr Ellis, take different views as to the scanning of verses. Dr Abbott scans a particular line in the Idylls one way, and Tennyson promptly repudiates the scansion. Prof. Mayor calls the first line of the same writer's Alcaics "five iambs, the fourth of which suffers anapaestic substitution" (p. 123); but we know that the first and third feet of this line were intended for spondees. The first line of Paradise Lost is scanned differently by different critics, according as they lay full stress, or half stress, or no stress on the initial syllable of "disobedience." On a basis so fluctuating, no stable structure can be erected. Truth, as in the



adage, can be only what each man troweth. Yet a fixed basis is necessary for scientific study of metre. Without it all is uncertainty and confusion. Some yard-rule we must have, if we are to measure the building at all. Regular recurrence we have seen to be of the essence of rhythm: if feet do not recur regularly, if even the number of accents in the line may vary, what is it that creates uniformity?—what is it that recurs?

No doubt, as a sentence in our last paragraph suggests, *feet* become more regular when we take pause into account as well as syllables. In the well-known line,

"Lochiel! Lochiel! beware of the day"-

we all feel that the syllables are docked. The poet might have written, with equal propriety,

"Strathallan! Strathallan! beware of the day."

And the metrists would possibly contend, therefore, that *Lochiel* is here a word of three syllables. This, however, it certainly is not. No one really pronounces the word *Loc-hee-el*. What we really do is to dwell on the long vowel of the second syllable, so that its length carries us wholly or partially over the pause which follows. Scan in this case for pauses as well as syllables, and the first and second lines of the poem become equally regular.

"-Lochiel! | -Lochiel! | -beware | of the day
When the Low- | lands shall meet | thee in bat- | tle,array."

Each line now consists alike of "four anapaests." But what a ragged army of anapaests the poem contains, even on this basis! In the interest of Classic feet, if not of our own, let us hesitate to use the name except as a very rough approximation. It destroys all sense of metre to be told that these are anapaests in any strict and real sense. An English anapaest is apparently as often a tribrach or



an amphimacer, if not even an amphibrach or a molossus. The "amphimacer" development is a regular and common one, a secondary accent being allowed to fall on the first syllable of the foot, as occurs more or less in the line,

"She is far | from the land | where her young | hero sleeps."

This line, probably on this very account, has been compared to a line of French heroic verse, though in this latter neither accents (in our sense) nor anapaests have existence at all. Yet lovers of poetry find no fault with the music of this line; it is not the melody of the verse, but merely our technical description, that is at fault.

Must we say, then, that the English poet is bound by no rule in this respect, that his ear is the final and only arbiter of what makes his verse musical? Assuredly we must, if we approach the subject with the idea of laying down rules for the poet to follow. The freedom of our English verse is bound by no fixed rules of prosody, and nothing is more ridiculous than to find our metrical critics blaming a line as bad, when the ear of even a refined and cultivated reader detects no fault at all. Instances of this, however, occur in every prosody book I have examined. Yet, on the other hand, it is clear that there are bad lines as well as good. Poets are not infallible, "not even the youngest of them." We all do, in practice, enjoy and admire some lines more than others. The aim of metrical study should be to see where, how, and why they excel or come We must not try to fetter the poet by our artificial laws; but neither need we adopt an attitude of mere passive admiration, and declare our inability to bring scientific analysis to bear on the ethereal strains that delight us. Such an attitude, to a very large extent at least, was adopted by the late J. A. Symonds in his suggestive tract on Blank Verse (London, 1895; reprinted from much earlier article in Fortnightly Review). The attitude does credit to this brilliant critic's poetical receptiveness, but it is fatal to anything like scientific study of verse. It is as if a music-lover were to declare it impossible to write down the notes of an overture of Wagner or a sonata of Beethoven. No doubt, an elaborate notation is there tasked to the full, and much even then remains unexpressed, is left to be interpreted by the pianist or the conductor. But the simple notes underlie the complex structure, all the same. And so in poetry, though our notation is crude and imperfect, it is possible to analyse and define, to recognise the simple elements from which a complex whole is compounded. Only let us be sure that we do not try to reverse the process; that we content ourselves with analysing, and do not seek to prescribe formulæ which shall be binding on the singer.

An excellent example of such analysis-work, but not wholly free from the tendency just mentioned as dangerous, will be found in the The little tract called Milton's work of one of our latest critics. Prosody (by Robert Bridges; Clarendon Press, 1894) is a tabulation of the metrical facts which the acute sense of a brother-poet has perceived to occur in the elaborately moulded verse of our great Puritan singer. The collocation of instances is admirable; it is work done once for all, and will serve as a basis for any future study in this field. But Mr Bridges allows himself to speak of Laws of Milton's verse; and, by a familiar ambiguity in the word, he goes on to deal with these "observed sequences" as if they were regulative principles in the poet's mind. But surely, whenever the critic tabulates an exception to his rule—and I think the exceptions are sometimes more numerous than he is disposed to allow-this shows clearly that Milton did not feel himself bound by the rule, though in practice he may have usually followed it. For example, when two vowels come together, Milton usually denies them their full value. This the grammarians call elision, a misleading term which Mr Bridges retains, though not without explicitly repudiating its technical signification. And he points out that the terminal syllable

of words like "miserable" is similarly treated. But Milton breaks through this rule when he chooses, and gives us a line like,

"To human sense the invisible exploits,"

where two syllables ought to be "elided," but only one is. The conclusion surely is that Milton did not feel bound by this imaginary "rule," though the fact that he follows it in nine cases out of ten is of great importance, and may serve as a typical instance of the immense value of such collecting of instances. This qualification once made, indeed, one can only admire and praise the patient skill with which the instances in this little book are marshalled. It is work which has been attempted more than once, but has never been done so thoroughly and so well, to the best of the writer's knowledge. It is by such humble a posteriori work, not by grand a priori theories of how our poets ought to write, that we can get at any real knowledge of the principles of English metre. They must be studied, not in the prelections of any theorist, but by Baconian induction from the actual work of our great poets. We have in English verse no other criterions to apply, no other principles to go upon.

Here, therefore, it may be natural to ask, What have our poets themselves said on the subject of metre—what is their own idea of the nature of the medium in which they work? The question is a natural one, but one to which it is curiously difficult to give an answer. With the exception of Coleridge's hint about scanning by accents, I cannot recall any attempt by one of our own poets to define the conditions of his art. It is not the best painter who generally makes the best expounder of matters of technique; and our great poets have been too busy producing to have time to explain their methods of production. This task has been left to our grammarians; they, trained in Classical methods, have expected to find these latter equally applicable to our own verse. From Lyly and Gascoigne, through Johnson and Walker and Guest to our own

day, they have been occupied mainly with trying to torture our verse into more or less accurate "feet." This work has its value, of course; it is the indispensable basis to any exact study or historical knowledge of metre. The results will be found summarised in any ordinary text-book; the Rules of Rhyme, by the late T. Hood (London, James Hogg & Son), furnish a useful and sensible epitome, not pushing analysis too far. Guest's great book, it is now almost universally admitted, was based on a radically false conception of the identity of our verse with Anglo-Saxon, and his theory of pauses and sections is entirely unwarranted. His scansion, moreover, is of the narrowest and most antiquated type; he is reluctant to admit a "tribrach" in heroic verse, and scolds Wordsworth and Coleridge for so employing the word delicate, which he presumes they did not wish to pronounce del'cate: And, in conception, his book is a History of English Rhythms (published 1838 - new edition by Prof. Skeat; London, 1882), not a study of the nature of rhythm. For the latter, where can we look? The poets give us practically no assistance; the grammarians mostly ignore the question, or dismiss it in a sentence. A few stray references, gathered from various quarters, may however be submitted by way of introduction, before we go on to consider the matter for ourselves.

Edgar Allan Poe, the American poet, has left a paper entitled "The Rationale of Verse" (Works, Vol. III., ed. Ingram; Edinburgh, 1875). But, with some brilliant flashes—as when he shows that the opening lines of Byron's Bride of Abydos are to be scanned continuously, and so become regular—the bulk of this paper is paradoxical to a degree. He starts with quantity as his sole basis, and conceives the "spondee" (which most writers deny to exist in English) as having been the original primary foot, from which all others are derived. His conception of "quantity" is hopelessly unscientific; he thinks accent necessarily lengthens the syllable on which it falls, and that consonants alone, not vowels, lengthen the

sound. Coleridge's theory he pronounces ridiculous, and considers the metre of *Christabel* very "rough." In fact, there is scarcely a statement in the paper which is not susceptible of challenge. The climax is reached when he comes to treat of Classical metres, and is confident that "Sunt quos curr-" is a dactyl, that *Maecenas* was accented on the first syllable, and *decus* on the second! Metrical analysis cannot be devised entirely out of one's own head, even a head so brilliant and imaginative as Poe's. Some knowledge of elementary facts is essential, even though we may refuse to be bound by every statement of the Ancient grammarians, who may very possibly have been as pedantic and narrow-minded as some of their successors. The title of Poe's paper promises well, but the execution is disappointing in the extreme, and it would be a mistake to regard any statement in the whole argument as resting on more than the author's unverified assertion.

Much more scientific, and up to a certain point convincing, is a paper "On Rhythm in English Verse" by the late Prof. Fleeming Jenkyn. Originally published in the Athenœum, it will now be found in his Memoir by the lamented R. L. Stevenson, Vol. I. p. 149 (Longmans, 1887). Starting with a review of Guest's book, he repudiates its theory of sections and pauses, and proposes an alternative one. Sections, such as exist in prose, but shorter and more regular, are taken as the essential of verse. Time, number, and rhythm concur to constitute these sections. A pause followed by a weak syllable is allowed to represent a "long" element, and the possibility of the musical beat falling on a pause is distinctly admitted. Most of his obiter dicta are sound and valuable, e.g., "scansion was originally based on a measurement of time." But he will not hear of the beat falling on a weak unaccented syllable, as it seems to me clearly to do in the second foot of

"Curiosity, inquisitive, importune."

And his theory drives him (p. 166) to condemn two lines, one from

Milton and one from Pope, in which most readers will probably find nothing but what is admirable. My own criticism of his theory, however, would be that, taken as a whole, it deals too exclusively with the intellectual aspect of verse. It is verse as delivered, verse as spoken by the actor, and as intellectually apprehended by us, to which his pauses and sections apply. Verse as verse pure and simple, as chanted by the child, as crooned out by the poet when thought bursts into song, is surely more akin to music and less to rhetoric than this analysis gives it credit for. The final test is in the penultimate paragraph of the article, where his "prescribed pauses" seem to me to leave Milton's words mere clauses of prose, and to ignore the very quality which makes them verse. Brilliant as the paper is, and full of admirable insight, it seems still to miss the keystone-fact which would have completed the building, and turned theoretical analysis into description of reality.

Other such papers may doubtless be found in magazines and reviews. No one reader is likely to have acquainted himself with all so written. But I know of nothing that is important or even conspicuous. The recent death of the late Prof. Sylvester has directed attention to his Laws of Verse (Longmans, 1870), and I was glad to find in it an express recognition of the "silent syllable or rest," which indeed he speaks of as "my theory." But he does not develop this idea here, nor elsewhere to my knowledge. The book indeed is not a study of metre, so much as a collection of examples (mostly translations from the Classics), in which he has illustrated his own conception of the way to write verse. As to theory, he refers to Poe's paper with unqualified approval. And the student who, reading his preface, finds himself informed that the proposed subject is Synectic, and that this divides itself into the three departments of Anastomosis, Symptosis, and Phonetic Syzygy, may be pardoned for thinking that he has got hold of an unusually pedantic grammarian, not to say a Professor of the Higher Mathematics strayed into a field where he has no business to be. This, however, would be a mistake. The reader who perseveres, and solves the riddle of the not very difficult terminology—discovering, for instance, that Symptosis means nothing more formidable than the callida junctura of appropriate sounds—will find much to interest him in the poetical Professor's examples, though he will not find anywhere an answer to the question we are considering at present.

One remarkable book, however—quite on different lines to any other that has been mentioned—must not be omitted from review. This is the Prosodia Rationalis of Joshua Steele (second enlarged edition; London, 1779). The name will probably be unfamiliar to most readers; the writer must confess that his own acquaintance with Steele's book is neither ancient nor intimate. It has, however, been referred to with approval by more than one qualified critic, and its teaching forms the subject of a contemptuous reference by Guest (p. 299). It is indeed conceived in a very different spirit to Guest's. Within comparatively small compass, and taking the form chiefly of letters to Lord Monboddo (the Darwin or Max Müller of his day, whose Origin and Progress of Language supplied a starting-point for Steele's discussion), it attempts no less a task than to set English speech, prose as well as verse, to music, or rather to show by musical notation the rhythm which pervades it. The notation must be seen to be understood, and the author's terminology is also to some extent esoteric. Words like accent and force are used in a peculiar sense, and much stress is laid on sounds being heavy and light, as well as long and short. The thesis or "heavy poise" is indeed what he relies most on, and he considers that most metrical writers err by confounding this with accent. Allegro and adagio, staccato and sostenuto, sub-duples and sub-triples, appoggiatura and the like, are terms of frequent use. Our heroic verse he regards as a line of six "cadences," beginning invariably with a thesis as above. The hexameter, in at least one instance (p. 80), is shown as a verse of eight cadences. His own ear seems to have been the only authority he regarded; a good reader shows the rhythm, and convinces his hearer that he is right. He quotes (and criticises) various Greek grammarians, and seems to have converted Lord Monboddo, so far as the main argument goes. But his remarkable and original book appears to have produced little effect at the time, though Guest speaks of it elsewhere (p. 175) as a more or less "fashionable" craze. Of actual followers I know only two, John Thelwall, teacher of elocution in London (Illustrations of English Rhythmus; London, 1812), and Rev. James Chapman (The Music of Language; Edinburgh, 1818), a teacher in the Northern capital. The book deserves study, however, both for its own sake, and because it has in our own day formed the basis of a still more elaborate and scientific study of the general principles of metre, to which it would be unpardonable not to refer in a paper of this kind.

The work of the late Mr Alex. J. Ellis, president of the Philological Society, translator of Helmholz, author of the great book on Early English Pronunciation, and of a host of minor treatises on Phonetics, Greek and Latin pronunciation, "Speech in Song," and other subjects connected with vocal sound, undoubtedly ranks as of the very highest authority on questions of this kind, to which its author had devoted the study of a lifetime. Many of our critics, and some even of our greatest scholars, were men who knew Latin and Greek better than their own language, and had paid little attention to the physiology of speech. Mr Ellis was of very different equipment from these. To an apparently more than sufficient familiarity with Classical authors and subjects, he added an absolutely unrivalled knowledge of speech-sound in modern languages, and of the physiology of spoken sound generally. His writings, with those of the veteran Melville Bell, author of "Visible Speech," to whom he frequently refers, may be said to have placed our knowledge of these subjects on an entirely new basis. In all questions of accent

and pronunciation, ancient as well as modern, Mr Ellis speaks with an authority shared by no contemporary writer. It is natural, therefore, to turn eagerly to what he has to say on the subject of English verse. But it must be confessed that the result is a little appalling. Just as in dealing with Latin pronunciation, so in analysing English verse, he presents us with a system which almost causes the ordinary mind to despair! His views on the latter subject will be found in the Philological Society's Transactions for 1873-4 and 1875-6, but an adequate compendium of them, in Mr Ellis's own words, is given in Prof. Mayor's fifth chapter. Following Steele's main lines of division, he further subdivides these until every syllable may have one of forty-five different degrees of value, and makes the effect of verse depend mainly on a somewhat obscure quality called weight. is as though, in analysing a simple melody, one were compelled to go into the minutest and most technical arcana of scientific music. But, after all, the love of metre is a simple and primitive delight; it is shared by the child in the nursery, the savage in his wigwam. It must be possible to put the elementary facts, at least, in a simpler form than this. Mr Ellis himself indeed was ready to recognise this, as appears from a note he appended to Prof. Mayor's criticism (loc. cit. p. 70, footnote). But he has unfortunately not given us this elementary and simple statement. In trying to construct one for ourselves, we must hope to work on lines which he would have approved, though I do not pretend to have studied exhaustively all his weighty and voluminous treatises. But if anything hereafter advanced shall be shown to be inconsistent with the teaching of Mr Ellis, the reader will be justified in assuming that it is in all probability incorrect.

The ingredients of English verse, then, I would venture to define as three: Accent, Quantity, and Pause. Accent may be regarded as practically equivalent to emphasis, the stress which distinguishes one syllable out of a group of syllables, one word out of a group of words,

Quantity is constituted either by length or shortness* of vowel-sound, or by the retarding effect of a cluster of consonants. The function of Pause has been already indicated. We all recognise it even in our most regular metres, as in the well-known Ode to the Cuckoo—

"The school-boy, wand'ring through the wood
To pluck the primrose gay,

Starts thy curious voice to hear,
And imitates thy lay"—

or in Keats's astonishingly bold and vivid line in Endymion,

"Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?"

But it is best noted in our "dactylic" and "anapaestic" metres, which require its recognition for correct scanning. Of these three ingredients, undoubtedly, by far the most important is Accent. It can override the others in practice to an almost inconceivable extent; Quantity, in particular, is as wax in its hands. Relying on accent, as said before, the English ear is markedly careless of minor degrees of quantity. Our poets know this, and sometimes, it must be confessed, presume on it. Our "accentual hexametrists," for example, are terrible offenders in this way. But they are no whit worse than the author of the famous line,

"'Twas thou that smooth'dst the rough rugg'd bed of pain!"

The remedy in each case is to attend more to quantity, not to imagine that it can be set up as an independent principle against accent.

But the whole which these ingredients make up, how shall it be defined? It cannot consist of any one of the three exclusively, though the predominance of accent makes it natural to lay most weight on it. This whole which they make up—this unit that recurs—what can we call it but a *Period of Time*? Time, we are all

^{*} See Appendix, Note D.

agreed, is of the essence of metre: is it not its prime and most fundamental fact? The sense of time, of regular recurrence, is innate and primitive; physiology suggests that it may be derived from the beating of our pulses. It is at any rate a principle understood by all; the child and the savage appreciate and enjoy it. Applied to motion, as Guest well says, it gives us the dance; to inarticulate sound, music; to articulate sound, metre or rhythm. There may be different ways of marking this time. The stamp of a foot, the waving of an arm, the beat of a conductor's baton—these are the obvious physical methods appealing to the eye. Metre, in its various forms, is an intellectual marking of time; and by way of enforcing this conception, we may briefly consider the principal forms it assumes.

The old Greeks marked time by an arrangement of quantitative syllables. To understand the effect of this, we must endeavour to realise what their speech was like. By the general admission of scholars, it differed from ours in being more modulated and musical; their "accent" was more of a musical tone or pitch, less of an emphatic and forcible stress, than ours. Their speech must have approximated to what we call "singing our words," as is done still in some dialects of our own language, and by some persons more than others.* They also, probably, sounded their "quantities" more distinctly than we do; we huddle up and slur over our quantities, because they are unimportant to us as compared with the accent. The Greeks, moreover, were without any notation to express sounds apart from words; they had symbols to denote intervals, but none to represent abstract notes. Their "song" was essentially vocal song, accompanied by instruments sounded in unison; of harmony, in our sense, they had hardly any conception. And, when words were set to music, the process was very different

^{*} See Appendix, Note E.

to what we understand by it. Each syllable had already its musical pitch, which must be recognised and adhered to; the limits of variation must have been very small. Now, Greek verse began with actual singing, probably accompanied in most cases by dancing. The foot of the dancer, or the throb of the accompanist's lyre, formed the original ictus metricus or musical beat. Under these accumulated conditions, it was almost inevitable that verse should adopt a quantitative basis. We are not to suppose that they had differently constituted ears and voices to ours. Given the same conditions, our prosody would take the same form that theirs did. Our sense of rhythm is the same, the instinct that is gratified by metre is the same. A slight modification in the means of gratifying it, in the way found most natural in either case to mark the time, is all that separates our prosody from that of the Ancients.

Nor, I think, need we assume the change from one to the other to have been a sudden or violent one. Here indeed we enter on debatable ground, and I have no wish or title to pose as an authoritative guide. Some think that in the 3rd century A.D. an inexplicable change occurred, which swept away the old instinctive sense of quantity, and transformed accent from a modulation into a stress. But it is difficult to believe in such abrupt revolutions. It is surely much more probable that the change was a slow and gradual one. The "instinctive sense of quantity," possessed by every swineherd and ploughman in the Ancient world, is probably to a large extent mythical. So long as accent was subordinate, it was natural that quantity should be the basis of verse. As the former increased in power, the latter diminished. The dominance of accent increased in rude popular songs, even while these still retained the quantitative basis. We can almost feel the Augustan poets striving against this tendency, elaborating and artificialising their verse by way of conservative protest. But the change still crept on, accent hardening and becoming more emphatic, and

enlarging its powers at the expense of quantity. The old verses are still written, but they are purely artificial, not to be understood by the vulgar. Finally, whether by design or in ignorance, the last step is taken, and quantity is definitely discarded, accent henceforward assuming undisputed predominance.

Such, one is free to suppose, at least may have been the course But, leaving theories now for facts, we find in the beginnings of our own literature verse with a definitely "accentual" The rude forms of Anglo-Saxon metre are represented to English readers in the consciously archaic lines of "Piers Plowman." Long shapeless verses, loosely held together by alliteration of the principal words, marked time sufficiently to satisfy a very rudimentary sense. It is in such verses that Dr Guest found the "pauses and sections," which he vainly sought to trace in our perfected poetry. English verse, fortunately, discarded what was barbarous and uncouth, retained only the freedom and spirit of its motion. It dropped the constitutive alliteration, the looseness, the undue length and unwieldy proportions; but it refused to bind itself to any exact number of syllables. Herein, I imagine, it was more fortunate than its sister-tongue in France, which came more directly under the influence of Classic survival, and early allied itself to a rigorous pattern of prosody. Our metrists and grammarians have continually tried to get us to do the same; our poets have continually objected and rebelled. Professor Saintsbury, in a just-published volume,* puts this clearly and well, though he attaches more value to syllabic equation than I can do. He is, I fear, to some extent tainted with the heresy of the grammarians! But he is abundantly justified in showing that English verse reached its full power by departing from the rude Anglo-Saxon latitude and approxi-

^{*} The Flourishing of Romance and Rise of Allegory (Blackwood, 1897), pp. 212-224.

mating more closely to the syllabic regularity of the Latin tongues; and that when this tended to predominate too strongly, the freedom of our Elizabethan writers redressed the balance. I would add that in the eighteenth century the tendency to syllabic regularity again threatened to become too dominant, and was again checked by the greater freedom of the Lake School and their successors. This freedom we inherit, and we should resist any attempt to impose the antiquated fetters of rigorous syllabic equivalence, if we wish English poetry to maintain its glory and its pre-eminence.

The argument from historical facts, therefore, entirely bears out what we had inferred from direct analysis. English verse is seen to hold a midway position between the absolute regularity of Classic metre and the formless irregularity of Anglo-Saxon. Those who identify it with either do it less than justice. Were other European languages brought into comparison, it would probably appear that German occupies much the same position as English, while French and Italian lean to the Classic side, and have influenced our verse in this direction. But, keeping to our own language, it is evident that a scansion which reckons by syllables alone is historically as well as analytically proved to be incomplete, inadequate to register the variations of English cadence. The system and the terms which we have borrowed from Classic grammarians need widening and recasting before they can record and represent the march of our music.

Proceeding with confidence to continue our own analysis, therefore, let us consider what are the obvious facts of English verse. It certainly consists of regularly recurring periods, and these are marked rather by accent than by any exact numeration of syllables. As a general rule, each period contains one predominantly accented syllable, which "sweeps along in its train" (as I have somewhere seen it expressed) a more or less indefinite number of unaccented syllables. Beyond this we can scarcely generalise. The number of

syllables so "swept along" varies even in our regular metres, still more in our lyrics and lighter forms of verse. The limits of variation are of course narrow, being imposed by our habit of speech, which rarely allows more than three unaccented syllables to come together; but within these limits the poet moves freely. It is amusing to watch the fruitless efforts of critics to restrict this freedom. Guest tried hard to avoid recognising any three-syllable foot in heroic verse; but he is driven at last to admit them. Prof. Mayor was disposed at least to think three such feet the maximum that could be allowed in one "iambic" line; and Mr Swinburne presently came out with one containing four. Prof. Saintsbury, more cautious still, doubts if the whole five feet can be so varied, though admitting that it is "theoretically possible;" what would he say to a slight modification of Mr Swinburne's line as an experiment—

"Thou art older and colder of spirit and blood than am I?"

Yet another writer * contends that, in lyrics at least, the use of an "anapaest" in any foot but the first makes a line cease to be iambic; but this dictum is surely too narrow to explain the last verse of Browning's "Lost Mistress." The moment, in fact, that we get beyond the most elementary generalisations, our plummet-line is out of its depth at once; those rash enough to lay down fixed rules find them set at nought by the only competent judges.

Even this, however, is not all. As a general rule, we have said, the period contains one accented syllable. As a general rule, it may be added, this syllable recurs in the same place in the period; the metrical beat, in other words, falls on the accented syllable. But neither of these rules is without exception. It is possible for a period to contain no accented syllable at all, as we saw in a line of Milton's; it is also possible for the accented syllable to shift its place in the

^{*} Royal Society, Edinburgh, Proceedings, Vol. XXI. p. 90 (May 1896).

period. The explanation of these variations is simple. When once a regular recurrence has been impressed on the ear, occasional departure emphasises rather than weakens the impression; the exception strengthens and calls attention to the rule. When Milton substitutes a "trochee" for an "iamb" as he so often does, or when Pope gives us a line like,

"Is the great chain that draws all to agree,"

the inversion of accent not only avoids monotony, but quickens our sense of the normal rhythm. We must therefore expand our idea of recurrence, and regard it as an ideal rather than an actual return of sound. The period is constant, the ideal elements of the period are constant, but the actual constituents may be varied in any way that does not destroy the sense of recurrence. The limits of such variation must be left to the poet's ear. When Mr Swinburne gives us as an ordinary heroic line,

"Illimitable, insuperable, infinite,"*

I confess myself unable to distinguish the five periods with any certainty. But I have not the slightest doubt that his ear recognised five periods as he wrote; I am conscious that they are there, and that without them the line would be mere prose. The rhythm is strained almost to breaking-point; but it remains rhythm, it is metrically recurrent.

A clear recognition of this fundamental principle blows into air much of the pedantry of the schools. English verse is seen to be written, not by the construction of rigorous "feet," but by the deft wielding of musical periods. What makes a period musical is fair matter for inquiry. Recurrence of accent is evidently a large part of the secret. But when we remember the loose and shifting nature of our accent, how difficult it often is to say whether a syllable has it or not, how minute and elusory are the degrees and inter-relations of

^{*} Elegy on Burton (1894).

stress, we shall be slow to say that this can be reduced to uniform rule. The sense of time, rather than any definitely regulated succession of quantity or accent, seems to be the constitutive principle of our verse; so long as this is clearly marked, the construction of the units which mark its recurrence is left very much to the poet's ear.

One broad distinction, and perhaps only one, can be drawn in accordance with this principle. Our metres may be conveniently regarded as written either in "common time" or "triple time." * Common time is where, normally, an accented syllable alternates with an unaccented, forming our ordinary "iambic" or "trochaic" x metre; triple time where, normally, it alternates with two unaccented syllables, forming "dactylic" or "anapaestic" metre. Our older critics regarded the former of these as most suitable for grave and stately measures, the latter as essentially light and "tripping" in its character. But this differentiation, like so many others, has been annihilated by the practice of later poets. Our own Victorian age has seen a steady development of the use of "triple time" metre for thought and emotion of the loftiest kind. It is probably safe to say that the quicker movement goes naturally with vivacity and animation, the slower with solemnity and impressiveness. But even this distinction must be taken merely for what it is worth; it may possibly have to go the way of so many other critical generalisations. One note of recent poetry, at any rate, is to pass freely from one time to another in the course of the same poem; and this of course to some extent throws doubt on the reality of the distinction from any but the most superficial standpoint.

^{*} These terms are not used in the technical sense. In quantitative metre, iambic verse has three-time and anapaestic four. In our verse, depending on movement rather than metre, the converse seems more applicable. Our iambic corresponds to the "common time" of music, our anapaestic to triple time or march-music.

The subdivisions of these two divisions of metre into iambic and trochaic on the one hand, anapaestic and dactylic on the other—even if these terms described an actual instead of a merely approximate succession of syllables—are but classifications of convenience, which disappear on closer analysis. The free use of pause in our language, especially at the beginning and end of lines, renders them practically undistinguishable. Thus a very common form of metre with us is what the books call "truncated anapaestic," where the two short syllables of the initial anapaest are suppressed; and this is practically the same as dactylic. When Byron writes,

"Thou who art bearing my buckler and bow, Should the soldiers of Saul look away from the foe, Stretch me that moment in blood at thy feet! Mine be the doom, which they dared not to meet"—

the critics are divided whether to call this "truncated anapaestic," the second line alone having the full complement of syllables, or dactylic with redundant syllables in the second line. As neither name is rigidly accurate, we need not spend time in discussing which is least incorrect. There is no real distinction between the two. They are forms or specimens of one and the same metre, distinguished only by the accident of whether the first syllable is accented or not; perhaps it would be more accurate to say whether the first period is occupied by syllables, or filled up partly by pauses.

It is clear that if once we recognise the possibility of a pause taking the place of a syllable, the distinction between dactyl and anapaest, trochee and iamb, becomes shadowy indeed. The advantage of this recognition is felt in our "irregular metres." In the more regular forms, in rhymed or rhymeless heroic verses, such use of the pause is comparatively rare; a line like that quoted from Keats is exceptional in the extreme. But in other metres it is exceedingly common. In the "Allegro" and "Penseroso" of Milton,

for example, iambic and trochaic verses alternate freely. And can we refuse to admit that a couplet like

"Mountains, on whose barren breast The labouring clouds do often rest,"

contains two lines of substantially the same structure, distinguished merely by an initial pause in the first? Similarly, it is disputed whether Mr Swinburne's "Hesperia" is dactylic with occasional redundant syllables, or anapaestic with occasional truncation. Surely the answer is that the metre is "triple time," and that the poet makes individual lines dactylic or anapaestic by skilful use of pauses. To my ear some at least of the verses which have the full complement of syllables are nevertheless dactylic not anapaestic in cadence, such as the line

"From the bountiful infinite West, from the happy memorial places."

But the distinction is shadowy and unreal, a mere creation of the terminology of the grammarians; what is certain is that the line is one of exquisite music, and that the terms dactyl and anapaest are very far from expressing the full secret of its witchery.

But the pause is not only employed at the beginning of the line in English; another favourite place is the end. The alternation of dissyllabic and monosyllabic rhymes, common in many stanzas, gives an excellent instance of it. Hence arise what the metrists call "iambic plus," catalectic and acatalectic lines, and the rest. But these terms explain nothing; they are mere labels. Poe sought to rationalise such verses by saying that the lines are not really divided, but run straight on. And this holds good in the case he quotes—

"Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle

Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?"

But it only applies where the lines begin with an accented syllable,

that is in "dactylic" or "trochaic" cadences. The same phenomenon, however, appears in "iambic" metre, where the explanation does not hold.

"Ten thousand times ten thousand, In sparkling raiment bright,"

obviously cannot be read continuously. And when we find these lines followed by

"The armies of the ransomed saints
Throng up the steeps of light,"

the true explanation is apparent. The first line ends with a pause, occupying the space of an omitted syllable, and the recognition of this regularises the metre. This pause is clearly marked in reading aloud, and should be recognised in our scansion. Time and scansion are not two things but one, and proper scansion should be a help not a hindrance to the reader of the lines.

The whole army of "catalectic" verses, then, may be regarded as exemplifications of the final pause. The analysis so far is simple and satisfactory. But when we come to deal with pauses in other feet than the first and last, our task is more difficult. Let me remind the reader, however, that the term pause does not necessarily imply a cessation of the voice. It only means that, where one syllable occupies the normal time of two, that syllable is either followed by an actual cessation of speech, or (more commonly perhaps) is prolonged so as to cover partially or entirely the space of time which follows it in our notation. In musical phrase, the quaver may either become a crotchet, or may be dotted so as to carry it over part of the "rest" which follows. Regarded in this way, a pause may obviously come in any part of the line, even between two syllables of the same word. That it does so, in English verse, and that accurate scansion must take account of this, is to my mind perfectly clear. And it seems possible that our verse is not peculiar in this respect. Apart from regular and recognised Syncope, what else was the meaning of the "irrational feet" of the old grammarians, the feet which took the time of other feet, "cyclic" dactyls and anapaests, "orthic" and "semantic" trochees, and the rest?* Must not we regard these as confessions, or at least indications, that the orthodox theories were too rigid and precise? The divorce of metre from music, early complained of in Greece by the highest authorities, is surely responsible for these hypermetrical makeshifts. We know that to the Ancients themselves the looser comic and lyric metres were barely intelligible without musical accompaniment. Were not these "irrational" feet really due to the musical beat overriding the quantity? However this be, it is strange that no English grammarian has proposed reviving these abnormal measures in our scansion. We have certainly much more need of them, if we scan by syllables alone, than ever the Greeks had.

But to return to our own line of argument. Syllables which are followed by a pause occur elsewhere than in the first or last period. Aenot uncommon form of line, with us, has three such consecutively. Witness the familiar

"Cheer, boys, cheer ! no more of idle sorrow!"

The dullest ear must at least perceive that here the first three syllables have extra length. Shall we say that they occupy the time of trochees, and that the whole line may be scanned as consisting of six such feet, the first and second words being followed by a pause? I do not myself think this is quite an adequate account. I suspect that there is an additional pause after the third syllable of the line, and that the time occupied is more nearly that of seven trochees.

"Cheer -, | boys -, | cheer -! | +no | more of | idle | sorrow!"

This may possibly be to consider too curiously. But that the first

^{*} See Appendix, Note F.

three words have a length beyond that of mere "long" syllables seems absolutely and entirely certain. One proof is the way the words are set to music. I take it that the first three syllables would be represented by dotted notes or the like, and that the end of a bar, to say the least, must intervene between the third and fourth words of the line.

But another proof is found in the fact that an extra syllable may be inserted at pleasure. Thus the third line of the song begins, "Hope points before." And when from rude popular song we turn to finished poetry, the same law prevails. A metre very like this is used by the late Lord Bowen, in a beautiful little poem printed in his lately published Memoir by Sir H. S. Cunningham (London, 1897)—

"Far, far aloof from Olympus and its thunder, Lost midway in the spaces of the night." (P. 214.)

The strong initial beats are quite unmistakeable.

"Here great souls, in a plenitude of vision, Planned high deeds as immortal as the sun."

But note that the very first line of the poem, as quoted above, substitutes an iambus for one of the strong syllables; and compare the freedom of the following:—

"What spirits these so forsaken and so jaded:
White plumes stained and apparel that is rent:
Wild eyes dim with ideals that have faded:
Weary feet wearily resting in ascent?"

The time remains more or less constant; the syllables and even the accents are evidently modified very much at pleasure by the sensitive ear and true instinct of the poet.

In these cases the strong beats are at the beginning of the line. More rarely, but still quite as unmistakeably, they come at the end. This structure is noteworthy in Browning's little poem "The Householder" (Fifine at the Fair, 1872)—

"Savage I was sitting in my house, late, lone: Dreary, weary with the long day's work."

The bizarre effect of these lines is greatly helped by their peculiar metre; but the freedom with which it is handled will be apparent to any one studying the thirty-two line-endings of this little epilogue. Another example is afforded by the alternate verses in Mr Meredith's "Phœbus with Admetus" (*Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, 1883), as for instance—

"Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God."

The time of these last words may be more open to doubt, though I think myself a rapid pause succeeds each of the three syllables; the fact of their accentuation is at any rate certain.

Here, curiously enough, we find ourselves once more in conflict with metrical theories. Dr Abbott and Prof. Seeley, in their English Lessons for English Readers (London, 1871), lay down three rules as of universal application in English verse. (1) We cannot have three consecutive clearly pronounced syllables without a metrical accent. (2) We cannot have two consecutive syllables in the same word metrically accented. (3) A polysyllable which has two accents must have them on alternate syllables; sólitáry, not sólitarý (p. 153). These rules, being based on natural principles, hold good in nine cases out of ten. But the danger of extending them to the tenth can now be illustrated. Though in Browning's poem the three accents always fall on separate words, in Mr Meredith's they sometimes fall on consecutive syllables of a word like coldest, showing that the second rule is not without exception. As to the first rule, I submit that in the line

"Many are the thoughts that come to me," the second, third, and fourth syllables are clearly pronounced, yet have no metrical accent; it is absurd to say that any one of them is slurred or "elided." For the third rule, such words as *inalienably*, *inexorably*, and the like are now frequently accented by our poets in the way here pronounced impossible. The old moral must again be drawn; principles should be studied, not laws laid down; the rules of one generation of grammarians, when they are rash enough to formulate them, are usually torn to pieces by the poets of the next.

The reader will pardon this seeming digression, which is intended to make precise the question we are considering about syllables which are accented as feet. I shall not attempt to lay down hard and fast rules in the matter. It will be enough to say that such syllables cannot be metrically accounted for unless we recognise that their time is longer than that of their neighbours, unless we scan to some extent for pauses as well as syllables. Light is thrown at once on the subject when we accept this principle. The poem just mentioned of Mr Meredith's, with its successors in the same volume, "Melampus" and "Love in the Valley," excellently illustrate its working. I instance these more particularly because their author has been good enough to give, in a note appended to the volume, his own view of the scansion of each. A poet who thus turns grammarian treads ground where he is but a mortal like ourselves. The syllabic structure offered as a key is undoubtedly followed in these verses; it would be doing them injustice to suppose that any intelligent reader could fail to recognise this, even without the key. But to conclude that this quantitative arrangement represents the whole music of the poems would be a far greater blunder, for which it were unfair to hold the master himself responsible, though his note may beguile unwary readers into such an assumption. Not even from their author could we accept such a dictum. There is far more in his verses than a "nice derangement" of feet. Listen but to the cadence of---

"Mindful were the shepherds as now the noon severe Bent a burning eyebrow to brown evetide,"

or,

"Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward, Couched with her arms behind her golden head,"

and say if you do not hear the pauses that combine with syllables to make up the structure. Or take but this single quatrain from a later poem—

"Now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes;
Swift fly the fleeces,
Thick the blossom-flakes."

Is it not obvious that these lines cannot be scanned by syllables alone, that it is only by attention to the "intervals" or *periods* that we can resolve their music into its constituent elements?

We may now therefore proceed fearlessly to draw our final conclusion. Not merely at the beginning or end of a line—not merely in cases of anacrusis or catalexy—but throughout the whole structure of their verse our poets claim the freedom of intercalating pauses among syllables. Many metres which appear "irregular" can be thus shown to be uniform. It is not of course denied that some metres are irregular, some stanzas composed of lines of varying length. When Campbell writes—

"Singing glory to the souls Of the brave."

or Mr Swinburne in a favourite form of stanza,

"With stars and sea-winds in her raiment Night sinks on the sea,"

the difference in length of line is of course obvious and real. But in many other cases it is merely apparent. In Browning's verse,

"Morning, evening, noon and night, Praise God! sang Theocrite,"

there is no difference in the length of the two lines. The pause between the first two words of the second line fills up the metre. The strong word *Praise*, if you like so to put it, occupies the time of a trochee. It does so in virtue of three elements — accent, quantity, and pause. It is accented both by the metre and by the meaning, and is thus doubly emphatic. It is long in virtue of its vowel-sound; a word like give would not fill the place equally well. And its length is helped by a pause, by the omission of the syllable which would normally follow it, so that the voice necessarily lingers on the word, and fills up the time of the verse by so doing. Adequate scansion must surely recognise these facts, and not treat the mere succession of syllables as explaining the full value and music of the line.

Altogether apart, then, from the fact that it is impossible accurately to separate *long* and *short*, accented and unaccented, in our rapidly moving verse, it seems clear that these distinctions, valid to a certain point, do not exhaust the whole complexity of the problem. It is by *periods*, not by *feet*, that our verse must be articulated. The arrangement of syllables, even of accents, within these periods, is not fixed by invariable rule. I see no reason, myself, why the accent may not fall on the middle syllable of a period, why we may not have an amphibrach instead of an anapaest in an iambic line. When Tennyson writes,

"Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life Shoots to the fall."

we are told to scan the last two feet thus—"the ra- | pid of life." The natural division by periods, however, is certainly "the rapid | of life," and it is difficult not to believe that so the line sung itself to the poet. The analogy of music seems to argue that the accent may be thus shifted to the second note of the bar. But we must be slow to assume that the periods necessarily coincide with the syllables at

all. Half the beauty of the line is lost if we regard it merely as beginning with trochee, iamb, iamb. It is the pause after nearer which really gives the line its music, succeeded as it is by those five hurrying syllables, "as the rap-id of life." To make a long syllable of as is to shut our ears to this music. That there are five periods in the line may be taken as certain; that these five periods must necessarily square with any preconceived numeration of syllables is not only not certain, but is absolutely at variance with fact.

It would be as easy as delightful to occupy paragraphs with illustrating this from the pages of the poets. The detailed analyses with which this paper began were meant to suggest this method of proof, and the reader's own recollection will probably supply him with additional instances to any extent. Recent poetry, in particular, abounds with verses whose structure is imperfectly explained by mere alternation of long and short syllables. When Moore writes,

"While gazing on the moon's light,"

or Burns,

"O wat ye wha's in yon toon?"

there may be some room for doubt; and similarly in Mrs Browning's line,

"The young lambs are bleating in the meadows."

But when a contemporary writer varies iamb and anapaest with lines like

"The rain | shone | in her hair,
And her face | gleamed | in the rain"*—

or another gives us a couplet which I shall leave the reader to space for himself,

"In lofty thought strive, O spirit, for ever:

In courage and strength pursue thine own endeavour" +—
the case seems too clear for argument. Or take that remarkable

^{*} Arthur Symons, Silhouettes (London, 1892), p. 6.

[†] Robert Bridges, Shorter Poems (London, 1891), p. 49.

piece of metrification, the "Kapiolani" of Tennyson's latest volume.*
Its metre is mainly dactylic, as in the tireless swing of this line,

"Dance in a fountain of flame with her devils, or shake with her thunders and shatter the island."

But at pleasure he alternates this with a different cadence, as in

"Clomb the mountain, and flung the berries, and dared the goddess and freed the people."

To explain this as a substitution of trochees for dactyls is merely to juggle with the terms of an alien prosody. It is at least more intelligible to argue that by virtue of Accent, Quantity, and Pause (not one alone, but all three together) a *period* like "Clomb the" occupies the same ideal time as a period like "Dance in a."

The essential point in our metre, it seems safe to say, is not its syllabic structure but its musical character. Scansion which does not recognise the latter as well as the former does no more than skim the surface. Even in lines which can be separated into "feet" without much difficulty—such lines, to take the first that occur to me, as

"From the great deep to the great deep he goes,"

or

"Down the low turret stairs palpitating,"

or

"Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,"

or a passage like this from Browning's Pauline-

"And I myself went with the tale—a god, Wandering after beauty—or a giant, Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter, Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief, Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos—"

in such verses, I say, the question is not what "feet" they consist

^{*} Death of Oenone, and other Poems (1892), p. 77.

of, but whether a division by "feet" carries us any great way toward understanding their music and structure. To debate, for instance, whether in the line just quoted from the *Holy Grail* "tower" and "spire" are monosyllables or dissyllables, seems to me little short of childish. They are assuredly neither one nor the other; they are combined with pause, and the blending produces periods of lingering beauty. How crude in comparison seems the naked stress affected by some singers, who love to speak of

"Apollo towering from floor to roof,"

It is in such elusive harmony as Tennyson's, such subtle blending of interchangeful sound and pause, that the secret of the highest English verse-making manifestly lies; and the results cannot be tabulated by merely counting the syllables on our fingers.

At the cost of some, I hope pardonable, reiteration, and perhaps of some apparent following up of side-issues, the main thesis of this paper has now been developed, wherever possible by illustration as well as by argument. What practical conclusion can we draw from the facts cited? It is far from the writer's aim to propose any new system of metrical notation. Such a device would only make things worse from his standpoint, leave scansion more of a mystery than before, more than ever "caviare to the general." Existing formulæ are surely sufficient to express the broader facts of metre, with which alone the critic can hope to deal satisfactorily. Nor is anything revolutionary likely to gain or to deserve acceptance. The facts are all familiar, and as old as the hills; anything believed to be new is not likely to be true. At the most, a fresh generalisation may set old matter in a new light, may make vivid some truth which has been dulled by long handling. In the few pages that remain, accordingly, nothing novel or startling need be expected or desiderated. It is merely proposed, by way of bringing together the results of our inquiry, to suggest how scansion can be applied to English verse.

leaving the reader to judge if there is anything helpful or fruitful in this way of looking at the subject.

The unit of English metre, it shall now be assumed, is a period of time. In analysing any verse, the first thing to ascertain is the time it is meant to occupy, and the periods into which it is divided. Usually this is not a matter attended with difficulty or uncertainty. It is very rare for an English poem to contain lines of wholly different cadence, as the Ancients coupled hexameter and iambic; Mr Swinburne has made a few such experiments, e.g. in his Erechtheus. choric odes generally, indeed, a change of metre is not unknown. But in all our ordinary poetry the fundamental cadence is unvaried; the only change is in the length of individual lines. To appreciate this fundamental cadence, we must take the poem generally, and ascertain the underlying structure, from which individual lines vary within narrow and definite limits. This cannot be found by rule of thumb; it is a question of ear to some extent. But, on the other hand, it is the poet's business to make this apparent; if he fails to do so, we cannot enjoy his verse. In practice, therefore, we can generally be pretty sure what is intended; some lines may be doubtful, but so they are in scanning by "feet." In all our principal metres, moreover, we are already familiar with the time; it is only in new and strange forms that any question can arise. Nor is there usually any difficulty in the further division into periods. In Blank Verse for instance, we all know that there are five beats to the line; and similarly with our other chief measures. What remains is merely to try to recognise the five periods which correspond to the five beats. These periods are uniform, equal in length; without this the line would not be verse at all. The time of each line is the same; the time, of the units which form it is the same also. Whatever else varies, this must remain constant. When we have thus divided the line into periods, allowing for the three ingredients of Accent. Quantity, and Pause, we have scanned it to the best of our power.

The result will not always agree with divisions based on syllables alone; but it is a real result, got by a study of actual facts, instead of a traditional application of conventional and partly inapplicable rules.

It will be triumphantly asked, perhaps, whether this uniformity of time is indeed a reality. Do not verses of the same metre differ in total time? Can we say that the same time is occupied by a lightly moving verse like—

"Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts,"

and one like our old friend-

"'Twas thou that smooth'dst the rough rugg'd bed of pain"?

The answer seems obvious and easy. The time is the same, but it is "taken faster" in one case than the other. This conception is quite familiar to us in music; there seems no reason why it should offer any difficulty in verse.

"When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,"

undoubtedly we feel that the line is meant to "labour," and the words to "move slow." But to say that this alters the time of the verse is to be cheated by a mere ambiguity in words. Time, in metre as in music, is an organic and functional relation, not a creature of the conductor's baton. It is not destroyed by being taken accelerando or rallentando. The comparison with music, here as elsewhere, clears up difficulties which are only due to misuse of language; and this in itself is pretty strong proof that our search has been in the right direction, that the close kinship claimed to exist between the two arts is a fundamental reality, not a mere figment of fancy.

The periods which compose the line are also uniform. The Greeks, with their rigorously defined basis of quantity, seem to have been able to couple feet of different measure in the same line. If

this was really done, and the music with its pauses did not supplement the quantity, we can only say that the result must have been one which our ears would not recognise as verse. Regularity of recurrence, with us, is the very essence and constitutive life of verse. By this is not meant that all verses must follow a uniform pattern. The ear craves variety, and will pardon much for the sake of it. But it must be variety on a basis of uniformity. At present we are dealing with the basis, not with the variations. And if this basis does not consist of uniform periods, then it seems to me impossible to form any conception of verse at all. If there is one thing certain, where everything else is so infinitely changeful and multiform, it is that the periods which form a line, in English verse at any rate, are uniform and not various.

Having got our periods, however, we may go on to consider their handling by the poets. Now there is room for any amount of variety; many volumes would be required to illustrate the freedom and daring with which our poets wield their instrument. This is the essential glory of English verse, which makes it so fascinating and so endless a subject of study. We shall do well to discard preconceived ideas, and place ourselves at our great singers' feet in the attitude of learners. Poets are not infallible, as said before; but they are generally possessed of finer and more sensitive ears than ours, and these are matters where ear is everything. When questions arise between Coleridge and his critics, for instance, it is generally safe to take sides with the former. Now and again, no doubt, he may turn out to have been wrong; but nine times out of ten we may expect to record a verdict in his favour. Therefore when commentators say that there is a false accent on From in the lines

"From her kennel beneath the rock She maketh answer to the clock,"

I am somewhat sceptical of the criticism. One knows, indeed, that

poets do take liberties of this kind, and in lesser hands the result is often disastrous. But in this case it is surely done deliberately. Once the correct time has been unmistakeably given, the poet sets himself to adorn and vary it. The shock given when real and ideal time conflict, as they do here, accentuates our enjoyment of the measure. Done too often, it would doubtless be bad verse; but its occasional use need not be a blemish. It is like a discord in music, which may be deliberately employed to create a beauty. I am confident that the majority of readers find nothing amiss with this line, and should be slow, therefore, to regard it as of faulty sound.

We are all too apt to forget that uniform correctness is itself a fault. Our canons are less narrow than those of eighteenth century critics, but there is still the same tendency to consider them final. Now the truth is, I suspect, that we can have no fixed rules in our verse; principles we may have, but not rules. We may study these principles, and deduce from them what seems to us a binding code of law; but it is always difficult to be sure that we have construed our principle rightly. It is by departure from customary rule that the best effect is often obtained. Studious disorder may be the highest form of order. And so lines like

"The dew on his thin robe lay heavy and chill,"

or

"Say, rush'd the bold eagle exultingly forth?"

are not to be condemned because the words "thin robe" and "bold eagle" seem to transgress the accustomed rhythm. The apparent transgression is a carefully calculated effect. The line is made, not by its feet, but by its departure from strict feet. It is not because "quantity in modern language is always loose" that such feet are tolerated; it is that by deft use of quantity and accent the poet has here produced a successful cadence, which derives its effect from a slight disregard of the time, a slight departure from the normal

movement. The danger of such a departure is obvious; in weak movement. The danger of such a departure is ouvious; in edge.

hands it creates confusion, discords which set our teeth on edge. 54

But a strong singer triumphs in overcoming the danger, and uses it to enhance not to diminish our enjoyment of his rhythm. ennance not to diminish our enjoyment of the consideration of the consid which may fitly conclude this discussion.

The may be urged by substantial formula of the conclude the discussion. which may may conclude this discussion. It may be urged by scholars that in the foregoing argument a confusion has been made between the second states and the second seco between two things which ought to be kept separate; we have professed to deal with metre, we have really treated only of rhythm. iE professed to deal with metre, we have reany treated only of Thythm.

So far as this is a merely verbal question, it may be left to answer

included the second of the seco o lar as this is a merely verbal question, it may be left to answer itself. It matters little what a thing is called, so long as it is properly recognised and distinguished.

But if the difference between these recognised and distinguished. Dut it is somewhat difficult to be sure of be pressed as a real objection, it is somewhat in English warea there is no be pressed as a real objection, it is somewhat difficult to be sure of the answer.

It may be true to say that in English verse there is no the answer. It may be true to say that in English verse there is no It depends entirely on such thing as metre, there is only rhythm. such that meaning given to the words. Exact definitions of each word are required before we can profitably discuss the question. If metre means nothing but a quantitative arrangement of syllables, inclined to down that it has a should be inclined to down the should be inclined to means nothing out a quantitative arrangement of synances, I for one should be inclined to deny that it has any real existence in that it has any real existence in the should be inclined to deny that it has any real existence in the should be inclined to deny that it has any real existence. English verse.

The Word rhythm, again, is one but lately introduced and sell because the second selection of the second selec into our language; it is hardly more than a century old, and still has some flavour of a foreign adaptation.

Substantially, however, I take some navour of a foreign anapuation. Substantiany, nowever, I take that rhythm means the movement and flow of the line, metre the it that raythm means the movement and now of the line, mede the two periods of which it is composed. If this is so, I submit that the two periods of which it is composed. periods of which it is composed. It this is so, I submit that the funda-conceptions have been sufficiently distinguished, though their fundamental homogeneity has been pointed out and insisted on. mental nomogenety has been pointed out and missied on the depend upon time, in our English verse, not upon quantity or depend upon time, in our English verse, not upon other depend of the contract of the co depend upon time, in our enguent verse, not upon quantity of other elements to syllabification.

These latter only combine with other elements to only combine with other elements. Accent and quantity belong to syllables, and these blend with Pause to constitute a period.

A succession of such periods is metre; the effect produced by such a succession is perious is metre; the energy produced by such a succession is the critic express will not suffice, let the critic express the the critic express with the critic express that make a whole.

the result in what terms he prefers. So long as he recognises the musical character of English verse, distinct from the agreemental systems, we shall not quarted with him as to the nomenclature in which he embodies this principle.

The scholar, however—should any such have been numbered among my readers—will be well aware that this is not the only instance where I have trespassed on disputed ground. Many points that we have passed lightly over might have claimed each a treatment. itself. A very few notes on some of these have been only and to the Appendix. But in the foregoing pages I have true to the control of the contro argument stand on its own basis, and with the stand on its own basis, and the stand on its own basis, and the standard or its own basis of the standard or its ow intelligible to an English reader. Invivorement of the control of most frequently written by wissian for woman are not altogether certain that the projected within judge of matters poetical. At a green a seried year direct my argument, past time to the restore and the poetry. They too have a night in the mark with the question be the fact and come them. If n what was no words preface to a same subject. The same is selected questice the their tissual and the part the schools. I shall be well worker to the second have earned with zzzzale ---

Finally, more are not to the hand has the most are to the most are to the more more more more and the more more more are to the more more are to the more are th

movement. The danger of such a departure is obvious; in weak hands it creates confusion, discords which set our teeth on edge. But a strong singer triumphs in overcoming the danger, and uses it to enhance not to diminish our enjoyment of his rhythm.

This last word suggests a final objection, the consideration of which may fitly conclude this discussion. It may be urged by scholars that in the foregoing argument a confusion has been made between two things which ought to be kept separate; we have professed to deal with metre, we have really treated only of rhythm. So far as this is a merely verbal question, it may be left to answer itself. It matters little what a thing is called, so long as it is properly recognised and distinguished. But if the difference between these be pressed as a real objection, it is somewhat difficult to be sure of the answer. It may be true to say that in English verse there is no such thing as metre, there is only rhythm. It depends entirely on the meaning given to the words. Exact definitions of each word are required before we can profitably discuss the question. If metre means nothing but a quantitative arrangement of syllables, I for one should be inclined to deny that it has any real existence in English verse. The word rhythm, again, is one but lately introduced into our language; it is hardly more than a century old, and still has some flavour of a foreign adaptation. Substantially, however, I take it that rhythm means the movement and flow of the line, metre the periods of which it is composed. If this is so, I submit that the two conceptions have been sufficiently distinguished, though their fundamental homogeneity has been pointed out and insisted on. Both depend upon time, in our English verse, not upon quantity or syllabification. These latter only combine with other elements to make a whole. Accent and quantity belong to syllables, and these blend with pause to constitute a period. A succession of such periods is metre; the effect produced by such a succession is rhythm. If these definitions will not suffice, let the critic express

the result in what terms he prefers. So long as he recognises the musical character of English verse, distinct from the rigorous syllabic equivalence of other metrical systems, we shall not quarrel with him as to the nomenclature in which he embodies this principle.

The scholar, however-should any such have been numbered among my readers—will be well aware that this is not the only instance where I have trespassed on disputed ground. Many points that we have passed lightly over might have claimed each a treatise to itself. A very few notes on some of these have been relegated to the Appendix. But in the foregoing pages I have tried to let my argument stand on its own basis, and to conduct it so as to be intelligible to an English reader. Disquisitions of this sort are most frequently written by scholars for scholars; and it is perhaps not altogether certain that the professed scholar is usually the best judge of matters poetical. At all events, it seemed permissible to direct my argument, past him, to the readers and lovers of English poetry. They too have a right in this matter, and it is time that the question be put fairly, and squarely, and intelligibly before them. If, in what does not pretend to be more than a prologue or preface to a large subject, I have succeeded in making clear the real question too often disguised, if not disfigured, by the technicalities of the schools, I shall be well content with the result, and may hope to · have earned some gratitude from such readers.

Finally, should any such reader incline to complain, on the other hand, that too much time has been spent on the mere shell and outside of poetry, let me remind him that the shell is still a part of the substance. Metre is indeed the surface only of poetry; the more interesting contents, the treasures of thought and emotion within, do not fall under its province. But, though merely the form, it is an indispensable part of the whole. Metre is not a mere dress, which can be changed or put off at pleasure; it is an integral factor in the result, essential not arbitrary. By some mysterious law, about

which philosophers might have much to say, rhythmical form is the vehicle through which alone a poet can express his thoughts. They would not be the same thoughts, if said in prose; nor can a poem be transferred from one metre to another without ceasing to be the same poem. In all great poetry at least, in all poetry that is worthy of the name, the metrical form is part and parcel of the impression produced by the whole. It cannot be superfluous, therefore, to give careful study to the structure of verse, though it would be foolish to restrict our attention to this, and neglect the "weightier matters" which the form is designed to express. To contribute in however small degree to a more accurate perception of the principles on which that structure is based, has been the sole aim and purport of this essay. If it succeed in doing so, more especially as regards the ordinary and perhaps not classically trained reader of our English poetry, labour which has itself been a pleasure will be doubly repaid.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A (page 5).

THE following are the twelve principal Classic feet, with their descriptions and symbols:—

| Feet of two syllables. | (Pyrrhic (or (| Chor | ee) | • | short-short | ~ ~ |
|--------------------------|----------------|------|------|-----|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Spondee | | • | | long-long | |
| | lamb . | | | | short-long | <u> </u> |
| | Trochee | | | | long-short | |
| Feet of three syllables. | (Tribrach | | | | short-short-short | \smile \smile |
| | Molossus | | | | long-long-long | |
| | Dactyl . | | | | long-short-short | |
| | Anapaest | | | | short-short-long | ∪ ∪ − |
| | Amphibrach | | | | short-long-short | \sim \sim |
| | Amphimacer | (or | Cret | ic) | long-short-long | |
| | Bacchius | | | • | short-long-long | <u> </u> |
| | Antibacchius | s . | | | long-long-short | |

Feet of four and five syllables may be regarded as combinations of the above. Thus the choriamb (p. 11) is a trochee (choree) followed by an iamb. For names of these other feet see any handbook of Greek or Latin prosody. But the above will suffice for the present study.

NOTE B (page 15).

The text-books teach that a vowel before two consonants is long. But Quintilian *Inst.*, IX. 4, 85, seems nearer to the true Greek doctrine. Cicero tells us (*Orator*, § 159) that the *i* of *indoctus* was pronounced short, that of *insanus* long, though he explains this by saying—non

fit natura, sed quodam instituto. The distinction between opious and Obess is familiar enough. Yet was it not ignored by the late Prof. Munro when he allowed himself to assert that quantity is not recognisable in English? See his paper "On a Metrical Inscription at Cirta," Cambridge Philosophical Society's Transactions, Vol. x. p. 374. [This is the paper cited by Matthew Arnold in his Lectures on Translating Homer (popular edition, 1896), and by James Spedding in Reviews and Discussions (London 1879: reprinted with additions from Fraser's Magazine, June 1861).] Why have the occasional papers of this most brilliant of Scoto-Cantabrigians not been republished in book form?

NOTE C (page 17).

The words of this sentence do not imply that the Classical accent was identical in nature with ours. They will be found unaffected by the question whether that accent was a "pitch-accent" or a "stress-accent." It has been often pointed out how Virgil delights in contrasting spoken accent and metrical "ictus" in the first four feet of his hexameter, while usually allowing them to coincide in the fifth and sixth. Some writers have even maintained that the chief Classic metres can be recognised by accentual rhythm alone, apart from their quantitative basis altogether. But the statement in the text probably goes as far as it is safe to venture in this direction. We have no reason to suppose that Greek and Latin accent differed as regards their nature; and by almost universal consent Greek prosody is totally unaffected by accent.

NOTE D (page 30).

It may be queried indeed whether this distinction is physiologically correct. A "short" vowel can be prolonged indefinitely in speaking, just as much as a "long" one. The opposition is perhaps rather between broad and narrow vowels, open or shut sounds. But in metre we deal, not with physiological facts, but with popular apprehension of these. A painter must represent his horse as it is seen by the human eye, not as it appears in an instantaneous photograph. So, here, we have at least a real distinction—as real, if not so familiar, to our ears as to those of the

Greeks. Whether the terms in which we express it are scientifically correct is an interesting question, but not of practical importance to the metrist.

NOTE E (page 31).

This view of the nature of Greek speech is not indeed universally accepted. Our lexicographer Walker (Key to Proper Names, &c.; London, 1804, page 256) even declares it radically impossible: speech and song, he says, are as different as rest and motion. But such dogmatism is not convincing. Against it we may set the testimony of our own ears in English, while the Acyadis To melass of Aristoxenus, and the cantas quidam obscurior of Cicero, indicate what the Ancients thought. Walker was of course no authority on Greek. Had he pushed his researches further, he might have discovered that even his admirable analysis of the inflections of speech had been anticipated by some of the despised grammarians. The whole subject is, however, intricate and obscure. Few of us, I suspect, can separate pitch and force in our own practice; and it is proverbially difficult to acquire any idea of a spoken language from books and diagrams. For Greek music see Chappell's History of Music, Vol. I. (London, 1874); Monro's Modes of Ancient Greek Music (Oxford, 1894).

NOTE F (page 41).

See Dionysius de Comp. Verb., c. 17: Plutarch de Musica, c. 28; and the prosodists generally. For the difficulty of comic and lyric metres, Cicero's Orator, §§ 183-4, especially the phrase nisi quum tibicen accessit. It may be presumptuous to suggest, but one cannot help speculating, whether the same reluctance to scan by anything but syllables did not unduly narrow the theories of ancient grammarians, as it has certainly done in the case of their modern followers. If rhythm could control quantity in one instance, why not in others? But my acquaintance with the subject does not justify expressing an opinion one way or other; enough here to state the difficulty, and leave its determination to more competent critics.

